

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Katia Ruesta-Daley, and I am a resident of Vernon, CT, and a Master's student at the University of Connecticut Social Work Program. I am an immigrant from Peru.

I stand in support of HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion Of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status. Expanding access to HUSKY regardless of immigration status is an important step in ensuring our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we need. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 26; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age. If Connecticut wants a future that includes healthy families and a stable, thriving, and growing workforce that is ready to meet the needs of our future, Connecticut must ensure that these individuals have access to health coverage.

I am formerly undocumented and have recently had the privilege of accessing health insurance through my work over the past few years. Unfortunately, when I was in high school, I lacked healthcare access. I played volleyball in high school and was always cautious that I wouldn't get hurt in practice or at a game. Unfortunately, I injured my ankle while warming up before a game. I did not share my injury with my coach and played with a sprained ankle for two sets. It wasn't until the pain became unbearable and I started limping that my coach noticed. She took me out of the game and asked me why hadn't I told her what had happened. I started crying and told her I was scared about the consequences of my sprained ankle. In those moments, I was not worried about my pain, I was more worried about the monetary implications of this sprain on my parents' finances. I was acutely aware that we could not afford the x-rays or the trip to the hospital. The coach decided I would see the school's sports therapist the next day and receive some school financial aid to pay for my crutches and ointments. It was a relief to know that this was accessible for me, but not every student or young person has these resources accessible to them.

That is why this bill is so important. It will not only provide access to affordable healthcare to so many undocumented youths, but it will also eliminate the fear that many undocumented youths face when needing to receive medical attention. I support HB 6616 as amended and ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time,  
*Katia Ruesta-Daley*